

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 SANAA 001455

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PARM MARR PREL MNUC MASS KN YM MARITIME SECURITY  
SUBJECT: U/S BOLTON'S VISIT TO YEMEN: MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN  
MINISTER, MOD CHIEF OF STAFF, AND DEMINING AUTHORITY

Classified By: Charge Alan G. Misenheimer for Reasons 1.5 (b,d)

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Summary  
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¶11. (C) Begin summary: During a day of official meetings on June 17, Under Secretary for Non-Proliferation and International Security John R. Bolton met with Foreign Minister Abubaker al-Qirbi and MOD Chief of Staff Major General Mohammed al-Qasami to discuss Yemen's relations with the DPRK and to encourage the ROYG to sign an Article 98 agreement (FM Qirbi Article 98 conversation reported septel). Minister of State Qassim Ahmed al-Ajjam also briefed U/S Bolton on Yemen's humanitarian demining program and the impact of U.S. participation on its success. During his visit to Yemen, U/S Bolton also met with President Saleh and his atomic energy advisor, Dr. Bahran -- see septels. End summary.

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Foreign Minister Qirbi  
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¶12. (S/NF) U/S Bolton, accompanied by Charge, Special Assistant Mark Groombridge, Jodie Green, OSD, and PolOff, began his meeting with Foreign Minister Abubaker al-Qirbi by discussing North Korea's nuclear program. Bolton noted that since last summer's confirmation of the DPRK's proliferation, the USG has worked hard to promote peaceful nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, he added, the DPRK has progressively escalated the conflict. The USG will continue to pursue a diplomatic solution, but, the flow of money which is funding the DPRK's nuclear program must be reduced, if not stopped entirely. To this end, the U.S. is forming a partnership of people around the world to denounce the DPRK's unacceptable behavior. Yemen's participation in this partnership is very important because of ROYG SCUD missile purchases from the DPRK, highlighted by last year's So San incident. Bolton said that it is time for Yemen and the U.S. to place pressure on the DPRK and deny it the ability to amass WMDs.

¶13. (S/NF) Bolton expressed his belief that a way can be found to deal peacefully with the DPRK. Citing a recent conference in Madrid, Bolton noted that the U.S. is prepared to do more than just ask countries to cut off aid and stop transactions. During the meeting in Madrid, eleven countries, all willing to bear the associated financial burden, are preparing to conduct operations to intercept suspect shipments from the DPRK. However, it would be less problematic if there were no purchases at all. Because of DPRK's record of continued deception, the U.S. is concerned about the sale of WMDs, including plutonium and uranium. The U.S. goal is to shut down DPRK sales of weapons and drugs, by working with Yemen and others in the region.

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Yemen and the DPRK - No Love Story  
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¶14. (S/NF) Foreign Minister Qirbi said that ROYG has been following the DPRK WMD problem and is ready to cooperate with the U.S. There is no love between ROYG and North Korea: the relations are pragmatic, based on the low cost North Korea offers on arms and construction. Qirbi stressed that the last shipment of SCUDS to Yemen was in December 2002, and ROYG is not upgrading the SCUDS in its possession. There is an outstanding order for spare parts, totaling about \$3-4 million, and ongoing negotiations with DPRK for the construction of naval base. (Qirbi quickly added that ROYG is open to alternatives on the latter.)

¶15. (S/NF) Qirbi also said that ROYG has no interest in providing the DPRK with any money for the development of WMDs, particularly in light of the threat to Japan - a major donor to Yemen. Bolton noted that the U.S. has talked to China and Russia on this issue. The U.S. is in a race to resolve the problem before the DPRK's weapon status becomes even more advanced.

¶16. (S/NF) Qirbi responded by noting that ROYG still needs to explore ways in to develop their coastal defense in the absence of the DPRK. While the problem of the Yemen-Saudi border is being addressed by new security agreements with the

Saudis, Yemen has over 2,000 kilometers of coastline which is difficult to control and must be secured. Before unification, Yemen had a limited naval capacity, and currently has almost none. The estimated cost for a new naval base in Aden or Hodeidah was \$80-100 million. U/S Bolton expressed an interest in pursuing this issue further.

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MOD Chief of Staff Qasami and the DPRK  
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17. (S/NF) U/S Bolton was originally scheduled to meet with Minister of Defense Abdullah Ali Aliwa, who was called away on short notice in response to a border incident near Marib (septel). Chief of Staff Major General Qasami began by apologizing for the Minister's absence while noting ROYG's satisfaction with U.S.-Yemen cooperation in the war against terror. Training by U.S. forces has greatly improved Yemen's capabilities and with time, will advance them even more.

18. (S/NF) U/S Bolton noted that, while the U.S. has no intention of infringing upon Yemen's legitimate defense needs, it is important that the U.S. and Yemen work together to cut off the flow of funding for the DPRK's nuclear program. The U.S., he said, seeks a firm political agreement that Yemen will have no additional procurement from the DPRK, and will work with the U.S. to monitor and exchange information on the DPRK and their sales in the Middle East.

19. (S/NF) Qasami noted that ROYG has discussed this issue before, notably with Secretary Powell, and hopes the U.S. understands Yemen's position. The purchase of the SCUDS was initiated in 1994 just before Yemen's civil war. ROYG subsequently asked for the money back, but, he said, the request was ignored. In the end ROYG decided to take the SCUDS. Qasami emphasized that no more SCUDS will be purchased and the ROYG will not upgrade those it already possesses.

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Negotiations with DPRK for a Navy Base  
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110. (S/NF) Reviewing the same list of ongoing matters as FM Qirbi, Qasami mentioned an agreement with the DPRK for maintenance of missiles and coastal defenses and negotiations on the possible construction of a naval base. U/S Bolton noted that the U.S. would like to cut off these transactions as well, and asked about alternative bidders -- perhaps from Eastern Europe. Qasami replied that ROYG looked at Eastern European contractors but they were expensive and they all wanted cash. As for the contract for maintenance of coastal defenses, that had been signed and partially paid, but the amount -- about seven million dollars -- is not large. The ROYG will stop that contract, he offered, if the U.S. will reimburse them.

111. (C) COS Qassimi again noted that ROYG will stop negotiations with the DPRK for the naval base if the U.S. is willing to assist. He lamented the many problems facing ROYG -- smuggling, Somali refugees, drug trafficking, and illegal fishing -- as well as the lack of the facilities and equipment necessary to deal with them. What happened to the Cole and the Limberg must not happen again, but the ROYG needs U.S. assistance to prevent future terrorist attacks. U/S Bolton replied that he did not question the ROYG's assessment of their needs; the U.S. is prepared to work with Yemen and others interested in solving the North Korean problem.

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The MOD View of Article 98  
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112. (C) Article 98: Qasami noted that the Article 98 issue was being worked between the MFA and the Ministry of Legal Affairs. If they ask the MOD for advice, he would support an agreement. Charge added that this should be an important issue for MOD because if Yemen ratifies the ICC before signing an Article 98 agreement, it will result in the loss of military funding. Qasami concluded by expressing his appreciation for U.S. cooperation on military assistance and demining, noting that 95% of demining staff are recruits from the MOD.

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Demining: Successful Program with "A Long Way to Go"  
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113. (C) Minister of State and Chairman of the National Mine Action Committee (NMAC) Qassim Ahmed al-Aajam thanked U/S Bolton for United States support to the ROYG's humanitarian demining program. American assistance was the "fundamental basis" for demining's achievements over the past few years, but continued USG engagement was crucial. Mansour al-Azi, the Executive Director of the NMAC, gave a presentation on Yemen's humanitarian demining program overall and the impact of U.S. contributions specifically. After the presentation, U/S Bolton spoke about the long-term needs of the demining

program, and offered to check the status of current USG funding for Yemen upon his return to Washington.

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Development: The Key to Security in Yemen  
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¶14. (C) Development was the main topic during U/S Bolton's lunch with Ahmad Soufan, Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Development and International Cooperation, Foreign Minister Qirbi and Charge. Soufan and Qirbi both emphasized that progress in development was the key to security and stability in Yemen. Development is the most important issue for the people of Yemen, because they need hope for the future and progress they can see in their daily lives. Qirbi also raised the Millennium Challenge Account, noting that Yemen is on the list of eligible countries. Both Ministers were relaxed and cordial during the lunch, and thanked U/S Bolton for coming to Yemen. Soufan emphasized that U.S. visitors do not come to Yemen frequently enough.

MISENHEIMER